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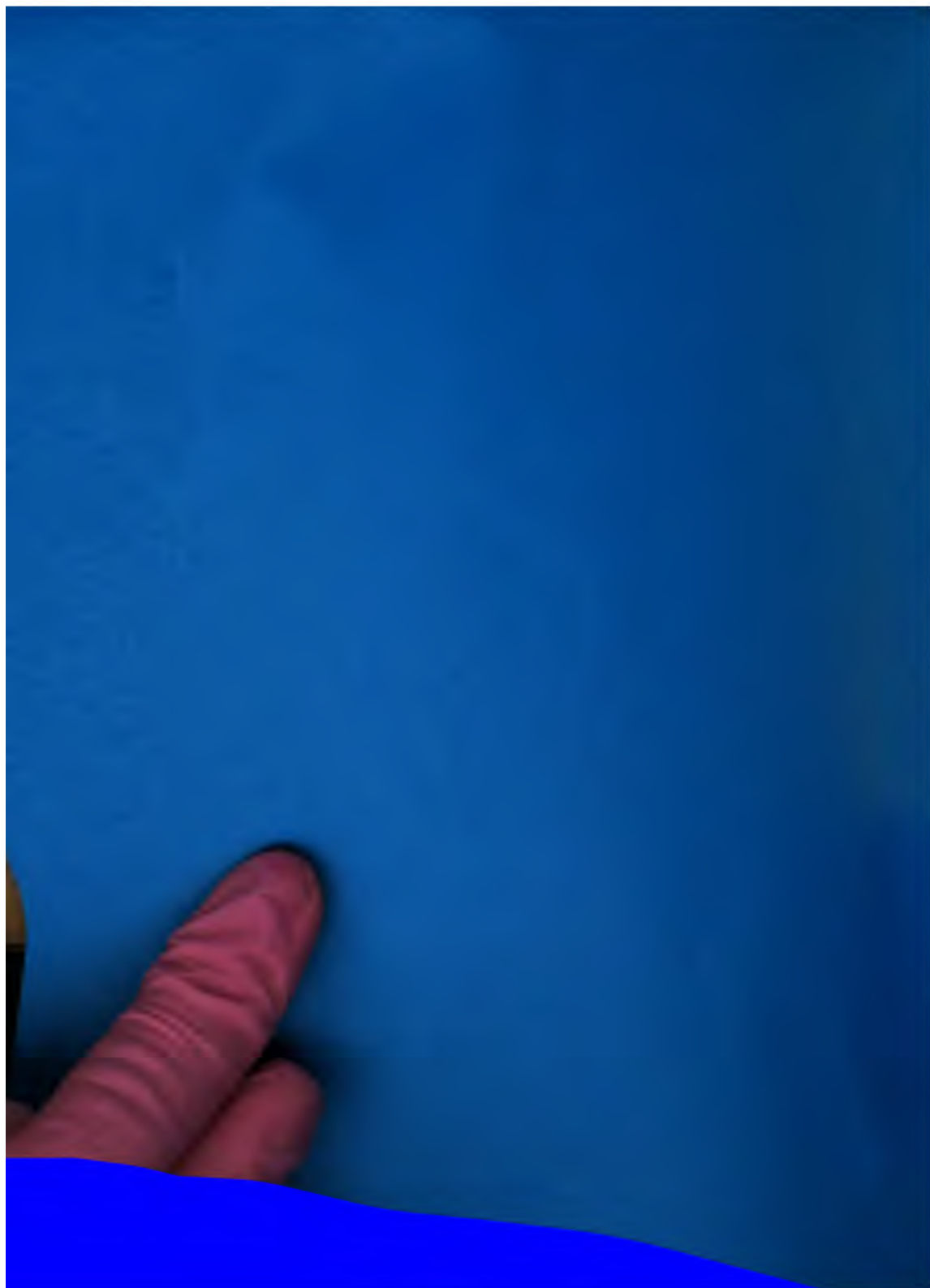
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A
PASTORAL LETTER,

ADDRESSED TO THE
Church and Congregation

ASSEMBLING IN THE
WARWICK-STREET CHAPEL,
LEAMINGTON.

BY
OCTAVIUS WINSLOW, B.D.



Leeds:
JOHN HEATON, 7, BRIGGATE.
LONDON: HOULSTON AND STONEMAN.
1852.



A Pastoral Letter.

My beloved Friends,

For the first time during a pastorate amongst you of more than twelve years, I am separated from my official duties by serious illness, the nature and the duration of which are well calculated to awaken in our minds serious reflection and earnest prayer. I was arrested in Paris, *en route* for Switzerland, with an attack, the premonitions of which were hovering around me—yet with a force so gentle as to create no serious apprehensions—on the evening of our parting interview at the Lord's Supper. Little did we on that hallowed and memorable occasion imagine—although the possibility of such a contingency ought to have had its place in our thoughts—that many weeks would intervene ere we should meet again; and that a scene of suffering was casting its cold foreshadows upon the path

of the pastor, and that a season of painful solicitude awaited the sympathies and anxieties of the flock. But not in the spirit of murmur, nor even of regret, do I refer to this event. I see too much of God in this dispensation of his providence, to allow a moment's existence to either. In its contemplation, every thought is absorbed but that of deep submission, and every feeling is stifled but that of adoring love. His wisdom fills my mind with admiration—His goodness dissolves my heart in penitence—His gentleness makes me great. What our Heavenly Father is in this his "loving correction"—what Jesus is in the soothings of his sympathy—in the succourings of his grace, the pen fails to express. In this light do I desire myself to view, and in this light do I desire to present to your eye, this our mutual trial. And ought it not to be so? With the cross of Immanuel before me, and with the heaven of glory which that cross unveils, and to which it leads, could we properly contemplate it in any other view than as a loving correction? "He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all," shall he send an "evil" which we refuse to interpret as a good? and shall not that



good, though wearing its sombre disguise, raise the soul to him upon the outstretched and uplifted wing—as the wing of the “anointed cherub”—of adoration, thanksgiving, and praise? If numbered amongst his saints—and, oh, be quite sure, beloved, of your heavenly calling—we stand before him, objectively, the beings of his ineffable delight; and, subjectively, the recipients of his justifying righteousness. Thus loved and accepted—and we believe, and are sure, that this is the true and unchangeable condition of all his people—shall aught but a sentiment of uncomplaining gentleness—a submission, not shallow but profound, not servile but filial—respond to the dealings, however severe, of our Father in heaven?

It is, beloved, in such disciplinary seasons as this through which we are now passing, that we become more thoroughly schooled in the knowledge of the infinite worth, glory, and preciousness of the Saviour. And I verily believe, and solemnly feel, that this is the great end designed to be accomplished in the divine dispensations towards us. How much is involved in a spiritual and experimental acquaintance with the Lord Jesus!

May I not say everything that is intellectually and morally great? We are in the possession of all real knowledge when we truly know Christ. And we cannot know the Son and not also know the Father. And it is utterly impossible to know the Father, as revealed in the Son, and not become inspired with a desire to love him supremely, to serve him devotedly, to resemble him closely, to glorify him faithfully here, and to enjoy him fully hereafter. It has been the distinctive aim, and the sincere desire, though the feeble and defective endeavour, of my ministry amongst you, to make known and to endear the Saviour to your hearts. A vision by faith of his glory, and a conviction by the Spirit of his worth, were coeval with my divine life. From the moment that that believing vision burst upon my view, and that spiritual conviction fastened itself upon my heart,

"Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."

And may I, as from a languid couch, still press the Saviour's claims to your regard? Oh, how worthy is he of your most exalted conceptions,—of your most implicit confi-

dence,—of your most self-denying service,—of your most fervent love. When he could give you no more—and the fathomless depths of his love, and the boundless resources of his grace, would not be satisfied by giving you less—he gave you *himself*. Robed in your nature, laden with your curse, oppressed with your sorrows, wounded for your transgressions, and slain for your sins, he gave his entire self for you. And let it be remembered that it is a continuous presentation of the hoarded and exhaustless treasures of his love. His redeeming work now finished, he is perpetually engaged in meting out to his church the blessings of that “offering made once for all.” He constantly asks your faith,—woos your affection,—invites your grief,—and bids you repair with your daily trials to his sympathy, and with your hourly guilt to his blood. You cannot in your drafts upon Christ’s fulness be too covetous, nor in your expectations of supply be too extravagant. You may fail, as, alas! the most of us do, in making too little of Christ,—you cannot fail, in making too much of him. Dwelling beneath his cross, your eye resting upon the heart of God, you will in all things desire and aim to walk uprightly,

—exhibiting the “man of God” in your conduct towards the saints, and in your transactions with the world; presenting your “body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” Shall not, then, every fresh contemplation of this “gift,” emphatically “unspeakable,” intensify our love and zeal, and our faith and activity in our Lord’s work?

But I am anxious, my beloved friends, that we should hearken to the especial voice of God speaking to us in this trial. It addresses both the pastor and the flock. To him how significant its meaning! It seems to say, “Come ye yourself apart and rest awhile.” It invites him to a season of self-examination, of communion, and repose. Think not that it is a begrudged gift, or a gift unduly estimated, when reminded that he who ministers to you in the truth of the Gospel, is expending in your service the flower of his life—the golden period of his intellectual being. How tremendous our mutual responsibility! how impossible to exaggerate it. Oh, that we may have grace equal to our relative position! But still it is prudent to study the economics of our



being, that we may know when to expend, and when to husband our resources. The mind, at certain stages of its outworking, imperiously demands a period of repose. The laws of our mental constitution may be outraged, yet not with impunity, even as those of the physical. And neither the one nor the other will allow of any arbitrary dictation or despotic rule. Obeyed in their natural and reasonable requirements, they will move on as orderly and as mildly, and with results as harmonious and beneficent, as those which govern the spheres. God, by timely and gentle admonitions, would remind us of this. How exquisitely touching was the thoughtful care of the Master when on earth, for the needed repose of his overwrought and jaded disciples. But with a higher mission is this event charged. If resulting in the deeper and more sanctifying experience of the truths he preaches in his own soul, and in an augmented power accompanying those truths from the pulpit to yours, then he that soweth, and you that reap, will together rejoice in this mysterious but righteous dispensation of our Lord. But to you, my beloved, how solemn this voice! It summons you to deep searchings of heart.

Has there been no wilful neglect of the channels of grace,—no listlessness in hearing the word,—no loathing of the manna,—no forgetfulness of the assembling of yourselves together for meeting for prayer, at the week or at any of the stated services, the Lord is now gently but unflinchingly chiding you? "Hear the voice of the Lord and him who hath appointed it." Is this the happy issue of this trial, if it be a detection and the cure of any of our evils, and stir you up to a fresh reliance on God, and a more diligent use and enjoyment of the means of grace. In connection I may just add, that what I have seen abroad has tended greatly to strengthen my own heart the great and costly with which, in our own happy country we are favoured, and has deepened the earnestness with which I am prepared to contend to a higher appreciation of the blessedness of an English Sabbath, a Protestant Church, and a Preached Gospel.

And, oh, if my pulpit silence for a moment shall awaken in the minds of any of my beloved congregation, yet un-

a serious, earnest, and effectual seeking of the Lord Jesus,—or if it shall lead any of you who are really seeking him to accept by faith of a full and free salvation, to believe in Christ and be saved—that Christ who never yet rejected a poor sinner who in penitence and faith came to him—whose delight and whose glory it is to save sinners, even the chief,—so that my return to you shall be welcomed with the joy of the “dead made alive,” of the “lost found;” will not this be the sweetest, the crowning blessing of our mutual trial? God grant it for his name’s sake!

I am desirous, my beloved friends, of availing myself of this familiar pastoral communication as a channel of conveying to you a few *practical hints*, for the kind acceptance of which I have confidence in your love, and the observance of which will, I believe, add to our mutual comfort. In the first place, let me say how grateful I am to recognize a marked improvement in the character and taste of our public singing. With the anxious solicitude which I have felt on this point, and with the pains expended in its promotion, you have gener-

ously sympathised, and have effectually aided. The voices which float through our pleasant sanctuary are decidedly more congregational, that is, the singing of God's praises is more general; and thus, not the least attraction of our public worship, it is generally conceded, is its sacred psalmody. May we increasingly "sing in the Spirit!" In reading God's word from the pulpit, I have observed that some of the congregation are not accompanied with their Bibles. This is a serious defect. A twofold object is gained by following the minister with the eye upon the book in the public reading of the word. The attention is kept from wandering, and the portions read are more vividly and indelibly impressed upon the mind. It has been observed, too, that in public prayer the attitude of some worshipers may be more reverential and devout. Instead of standing during the offering of intercession on the part of the minister, with open and often roving eye, I would affectionately suggest that each individual should either bend the knee, or, where that is felt to be inconvenient, should bow the head, in profound reverence before God. We need more *harmony* as a worshipping

congregation (a perfection I am anxious to promote in everything) in our posture in public prayer. The spectacle of some standing, and of others sitting, and yet of others kneeling, is not lovely. It is deficient in symmetry and impressiveness. I should be glad if none stood, or sat, but that all were prostrate, during this spiritual and solemn part of our service. But the spirit of prayer in your hearts will suggest its appropriate attitude. A more regular attendance of some at the commencement of public worship—the studied suppression of every disturbance of the perfect stillness of God's house, and the mind of the preacher—a strict observance of the courtesies of the sanctuary due to strangers, are points which with all affection and faithfulness I would commend to your consideration. They may appear trivial to your view, but nothing is really so that is connected with, and is promotive of, the Divine glory. But I am in danger of wearying you with the length of this epistle, and will bring it to a close. In doing so, let me offer you my warmest thanks for your affectionate sympathy and prayers. Both have proved most soothing to me in my affliction.

Let me commend to your affectionate regard and prayers the ministers of Christ, who, from sympathy with me, and love to their Master, may occupy my pulpit. Let them find you in your places, prepared to welcome both them and their sacred message. I desire my love to the dear Sabbath School Teachers, much regretting my inability to plead for their interesting schools this year. I trust they will remain zealous and faithful, and now much more in my absence. Continue to cherish affection, fellowship, and kindly offices towards all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, of other christian congregations. Let brotherly love continue amongst yourselves, and towards all saints. You will be pleased to hear that I am gradually improving in health; and though I cannot speak with strong confidence, for my prostration of strength is very great, yet, the Lord willing, I hope to occupy my pulpit on the *first Sunday in October*. Need I apologize for any plainness of speech in this address to you? I offer it in the words of the inspired apostle. "You know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that you would walk worthy of God, who

hath called you unto his kingdom and
glory." To his love and blessing I com-
mend you in solemn prayer.

Believe me,

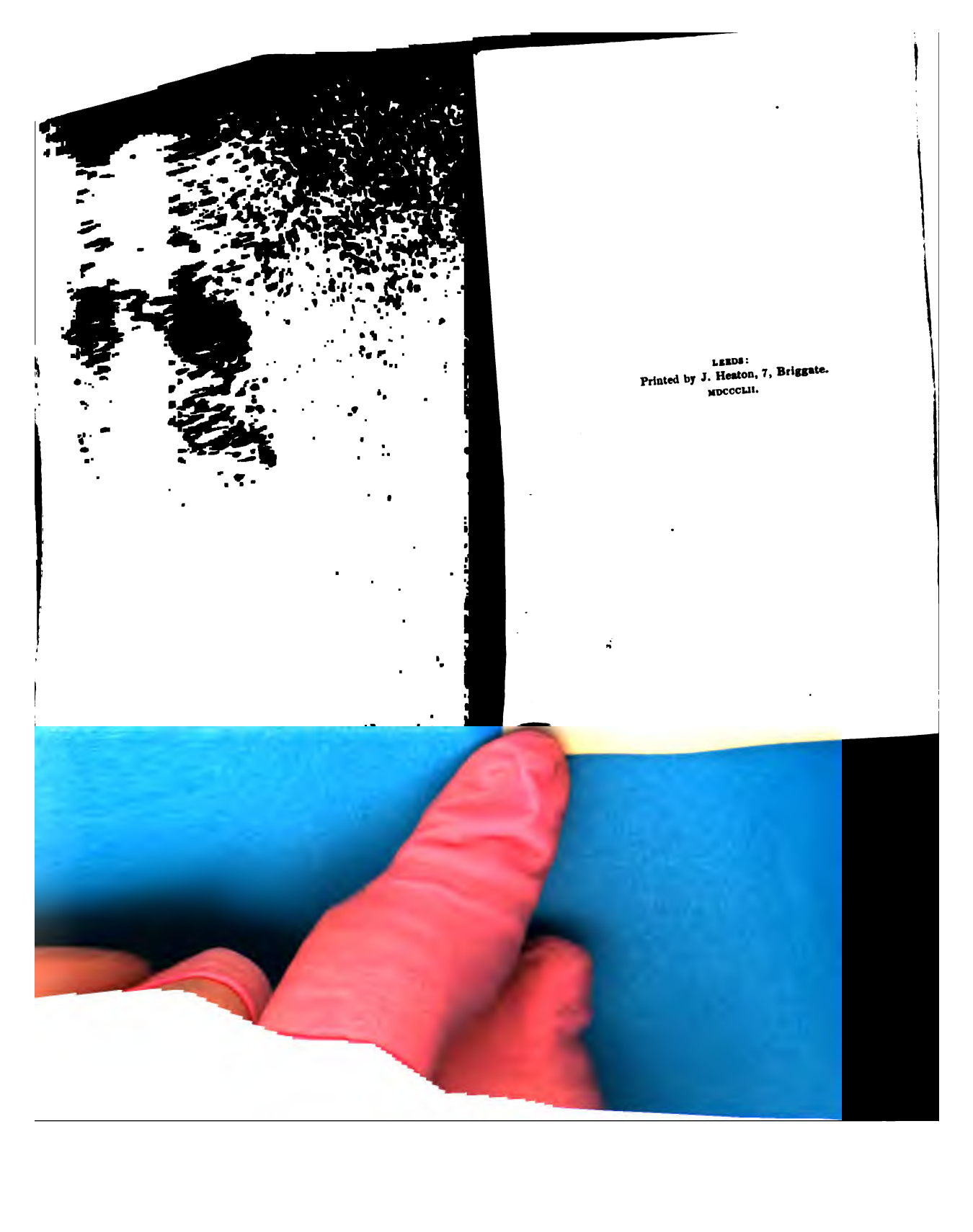
My beloved Friends,

Your affectionate Minister,

OCTAVIUS WINSLOW.

DOVER, *August 1st*, 1852.

THE END.



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